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# Reflections on the Hong Kong Riot and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union: Interview with John Ross

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## ABSTRACT

The simultaneous combination of provocations by rioters in Hong Kong, the trade aggression against China by the United States (US), an international propaganda campaign of lying about China's anti-terrorist policies in Xinjiang, and sales of US weapons to the Taiwan region shows the type of "hybrid war" being waged by the US to try to block China's national development. In this interview, John Ross, former Director of Economic and Business Policy for the Mayor of London, and senior fellow at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University of China, shares with us his unique perspective on such a "hybrid war," with the conclusion that only the Communist Party of China (CPC) can defend China against these attacks, which is the fundamental lesson of international experience of all similar attacks carried out by the US, whether against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Germany, Japan or other countries.

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## A Hybrid War

**Zixu Liu (ZL):** *Thank you for agreeing to do the interview. We would like to hear your comments on the current Sino-US relations. For example, how do you look at the current trade war between the US and China and its escalation? Would China make significant compromises? How would it affect the overall international structure?*

**John Ross (JR):** Well, first and foremost, the trade war between the US and China is not an isolated event. The simultaneous combination of provocations by rioters in Hong Kong, the US trade aggression against China, an international propaganda campaign of lying about China's anti-terrorist policies in Xinjiang, and sales of US weapons to the Taiwan region shows the type of "hybrid war" being waged by the US to try to block China's national development. Only the CPC can defend China against these attacks. That is the fundamental lesson of international experience of all similar attacks carried out by the US, whether against the USSR, Germany, Japan or other countries.

Indeed, to an observer in the West the tactics being carried out by the US in its current attack on China are so similar to those by which the US successfully destroyed the USSR, and also its attacks on other major countries, that it is extremely simple to predict these

moves in advance. In its attacks on China it will be seen that the US is attempting to use similar social forces and to exploit the same confusions among them as in all these other cases.

But there is a crucial difference to the former attacks on the USSR. In the USSR the communist party failed to act against these combined attacks and as a result the USSR collapsed in “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [20th] century”<sup>1</sup>—in Putin’s apt words. In China, on the contrary, the CPC is combating these attacks—it is this role played by the CPC which is decisive in keeping open the path to China’s national development. Indeed, without this role played by the CPC, as will be analysed, China would inevitably suffer the same national catastrophe as the USSR, and other countries, when attacked by the US.

**ZL:** *This is indeed a unique perspective, and a very important one that China should be aware of. In China, however, the combination of the form of attacks on China being carried out in Hong Kong with other US methods, such as the trade war, or the attacks on Huawei, is not always sufficiently well-understood in the media. It would therefore be helpful to see the situation clearly, to make a systematic comparison of the present attacks on China in Hong Kong with those that were previously used against the USSR. This is partly the reason why we wish to have an interview with you in the first place. Could we start with what you called the “hybrid war”? What does it mean exactly?*

**JR:** A combination of different but coordinated attacks by US administrations forms a pattern which Russian patriots, and the Latin American left, who have long experience of such assaults, term a “hybrid war.” By this term is meant an attack which is short of frontal military war but goes far beyond merely economic measures—it includes a combination of encouragement of separatism, economic pressure, cyber warfare, attempts to exploit any confusion in economic policy, systematic attempts to gain support among comprador layers, attempts to promote pro-US concepts in universities, attempts to control parts of the mass media, use of foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs), etc.

### The True Legacy of British Colonialism in Hong Kong

**ZL:** *So it is of the essence of such a “hybrid war” that there should be a combination of such attacks and not only a single point of assault. As part of such a “hybrid war,” could you talk in a little more detail here about the attack in Hong Kong, and give a brief analysis of the interaction of this form of attack with others?*

**JR:** Sure, and in doing this I would like to draw on my personal experiences in Russia. Furthermore, in one aspect, I have sources of information which are necessarily not available to someone who is Chinese. This is that, because I am a Westerner, anti-China forces, and earlier anti-Russian forces, initially assumed that I must support the attacks on China and Russia. Therefore, these forces spoke to me openly of their goals in a way they were careful to conceal from either Chinese or Russians—later, when I published articles to support China, of course such sources of information stopped but by then I had enough information. I have therefore added to objective analysis certain living personal experiences which I hope may make more vivid and clear the types of attacks which are launched on China.

The present tactics being used to attempt to create disorder in Hong Kong are nothing new. Historically they are the latest development of strategy and tactics developed by British colonialism, in creating the world's largest Empire, and which were copied by the US as it rose to become a great power.

Indeed, the historical background of the present events in Hong Kong is obviously very directly the legacy of more than a century and half of the British colonial rule of that part of China. But to understand this clearly it is necessary to correct a misunderstanding regarding British colonial forms of rule. Because the British seizure of Hong Kong in the first opium war, and subsequent British attacks on China such as the burning of the old Summer Palace in the second opium war, were so violent, such open military aggression, this has led some in China to perceive Britain as primarily ruling its vast historical Empire, the largest in history, chiefly by force. To illustrate this, in 2013 there was a discussion on the Chinese internet of an excellent, and factually accurate, British historical study which showed that Britain had militarily attacked almost 90% of the world's countries—of approximately 200 countries in the world only 22 had never been attacked or invaded by Britain.

But while such facts regarding British military aggression are entirely true nevertheless by themselves, they fail to see the integrated approach taken by Britain in running its colonial Empire—which leads to a failure to grasp some of the key features of the situation in Hong Kong.

Certainly, Britain never hesitated to use the most extreme forms of violence to maintain its Empire. The British Empire's well-known use of military violence against China was only one of many comparable acts.

The First Indian War of Independence in 1857 was suppressed by massacres by the British forces involving hundreds of thousands of victims and including methods such as strapping victims to the barrels of cannons and blowing them to pieces and forcing them to lick buildings freshly stained with blood of the dead before subsequent public hangings.

The British Empire killed tens of millions of people by famines in which it blocked food supplies from entering, or even exported food from hunger ravaged areas. Typical examples were the late nineteenth century famines in India in which a minimum of 13 million people died, or the Irish famine of 1845–1849 in which 1.5 million died—following which millions emigrated, leaving Ireland as one of the few countries in the world with a lower population today than in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Britain was the main organiser of the transatlantic slave trade over period of three centuries during which at least 12 million people were enslaved and transported from Africa.

These deaths of tens of millions of people were the actual content of so called “Western values” which “liberals” in the West, and their mouthpieces in China, wish to draw attention away from.

But it is a great underestimation of British colonialism, despite its massacres and ruthlessness, to believe it relied simply on repression. As a relatively small island Britain never possessed enough military force to rule such a vast Empire only by repression. It therefore used as its fundamental policy “divide and rule”—the British Empire was expert in identifying or creating social divisions which it could then deepen.

Britain had two standard techniques for deepening such social divisions. First, to create a “comprador elite”—that is a small privileged group of the country it ruled who were

allowed to become rich under British rule and were given some access, even if second class, to high British society. In India maharajas were allowed to keep local powers, parade with elephants in front of British monarchs or their representatives and join British sporting and social clubs. In the case of Hong Kong, the appointed British ruler allowed some Hong Kong Chinese to become rich—and join exclusive British clubs.

Of course, the rights of this “comprador elite” were never made equal to those of the British rulers. In Hong Kong there was never any form of election of the Governor, in India there was never election of the Viceroy. This is why, of course, it is total hypocrisy when Britain denounces the present governmental system in Hong Kong, which does have elections. As China rightly replied to the last British governor of Hong Kong Lord Patten, “who elected you?”

What was created among this comprador elite was what might be referred to as a high level “slave mentality.” This comprador layer was allowed a high standard of living in return for betraying their country and worshipping their British rulers for allowing this—and for Britain preventing the comprador elite from being removed by the mass of the population.

However, the number of people who could be granted the high standard of living of the comprador elite was relatively small due to limits on economic resources. Much wider social layers could be trapped in a “slave mentality” by the method of “divide and rule.” In this the social position of a chosen group might not be good but they were persuaded to ignore their inadequate economic and social position by looking down on another group who were even worse off. By this means of “slave mentality,” worship of the British rule was achieved by getting one social group to look down on and despise others in the population of the same country. For example, in Ireland, Protestants were given privileges and encouraged to look down on the majority Catholic population. In South Africa, Britain encouraged immigration of Asians who were encouraged to look down on Africans while looking up to the “whites.” In Hong Kong, the British encouraged parts of the local population to ignore the fact that they were excluded from all real power by the British occupation by considering themselves superior to the mainland of China. There were, of course, always strong Chinese patriots in Hong Kong, but Britain did everything it could to create “divide and rule.”

Later, as the US capitalist class rose to become the head of a great power, it faithfully learnt from these British “divide and rule” tactics. Domestically, within the US, this was used on a massive scale in the US South where the “poor whites” were exploited by their local rulers, and lived in very poor social conditions, but were encouraged not to challenge this by “looking down” on, indeed to physically terrorise, the black population—a classic example of a “slave mentality.” Such policies were also applied by the US to its assault on the USSR—and later to its policy across the rest of Eastern Europe.

The US naturally itself always dealt with separatism in the most ruthless fashion. When the Southern Confederacy broke away in 1860 the entire military might of the US was deployed against it. Lincoln, usually considered within the US as its greatest president, was prepared to employ the most destructive and ruthless military methods against the separatists. Sherman, probably the key US general in the Civil War, is considered to have invented “total war”—that is aiming to destroy not only the armed forces of the enemy but also to devastate its economy by relentless burning, looting and destruction of the US South. Lincoln could rightly be described as the greatest anti-separatist

fighter in US history—but, of course, the US, for its own purposes is careful to attempt to conceal this reality in case it should be copied by other countries (including China)!

In international US strategy, attacks on other countries sought to promote “divide and rule” and separatism as a key method—as with Britain earlier. Copying the method of the “poor whites” in the US South, the US strategy was to find a group within a country which had a somewhat higher standard of living than the majority of that country or region. The US propaganda strategy was then to attempt to convince them that they should not seek a way forward in helping raise the living standard of the entire country, a patriotic approach, but instead they should break away—placing their selfish interests first and ignoring the interests of the majority of the population. This was the method used by the US in its attack on the USSR—and was also utilised in other parts of Eastern Europe.

### Lessons From the Disintegration of the USSR

**ZL:** *Speaking of the tactics adopted by the US in its attacks on the Soviet Union, they are obviously comparable with what is going on in Hong Kong today. But before we move to the current issues in Hong Kong, I'd like to hear some further elaboration, with references to your personal experiences if possible, on the separatism in the destruction of the USSR. If that was also a “hybrid war,” what specific tactics and forces were involved?*

**JR:** Turning to the crucial period leading to the disintegration of the USSR, during Gorbachev's presidency in 1985–1991, it was perfectly possible to predict in advance the success that was being achieved by China's policies in this period and also the parallel catastrophe that would be produced by Gorbachev's policies—the present author was predicting this from 1985.

In regard to the specific issue of separatism Jack Matlock, US Ambassador to the USSR from 1987 to its collapse in 1991, describes in his memoirs in detail US relations with the Baltic State separatists—in a chapter with the self-explanatory title “The Balts Take the Lead” (Matlock 1995, 227–255). Matlock does not disguise that from their very first meeting with him, as a representative of the US, the separatists explained their goals and he replied that “I would stay in constant touch with these . . . leaders over the coming months” (Matlock 1995, 232).

Simultaneously Matlock was in contact with Yeltsin—the leader of the restoration of capitalism in Russia. Yeltsin, naturally, supported the separatists, declaring they should grab as much sovereignty as you can swallow. This was despite the fact that in a referendum in March 1991 the population of the USSR voted by a big majority to maintain the Soviet Union. In August 1991 Yeltsin, by then President of Russia, in one of his first key actions, formally recognised the independence of the Baltic States—the first step to the victory of separatism which led to the breakup of the USSR in December 1991.

Even after the breakup of the USSR the US continued to promote separatism as a way of weakening the states which emerged from the disintegration of the USSR. In particular, after the breakup of the USSR, Ukraine's economy still relied for its potential prosperity on links with Russia's economy. But the US systematically supported the most anti-Russian policies and forces in Ukraine culminating in the “Euromaidan” coup d'état of February 2014, in which the elected president of the Ukraine was overthrown and after which a military attack on the civilian Russian speaking population in the east of Ukraine was

launched. This savage terror attack on the Russian speaking population in Ukraine was only halted, first, by a popular uprising in which communists played a key role and then by Russian intervention—it is irrelevant for present purposes whether these were Russian volunteers, as the Russian government stated, or they were Russian regular armed forces as the West claimed. In either case their role was deeply progressive in preventing massacres in eastern Ukraine following the coup d'état in Kiev.

The result of this sustained US intervention was to create an economic catastrophe in Ukraine with its GDP falling by 26% between 1992 and 2018<sup>2</sup>—the largest long-term economic decline in a major economy since the Industrial Revolution. But US foreign policy was naturally indifferent to the suffering imposed on the Ukrainian people as this foreign policy succeeded in achieving its goal, first of supporting Ukrainian separatism and then maintaining Ukraine's distance from its only viable economic partner—Russia.

A similar policy was followed by the US and its allies in other parts of Eastern Europe in fragmenting economies and states. For example, the disintegration of Yugoslavia was precipitated by the recognition of the independence of Slovenia—a richer part of Yugoslavia. The US then intervened politically and militarily to ensure the further disintegration of the Yugoslav state—including in this bombing China's embassy in Belgrade in 1999.

The virtual identity of these US tactics of encouraging separatism to what is occurring in Hong Kong at present is evident.

## Separatism and Economic Attacks

**ZL:** *Allow me to add a follow up question here. Other than political and military attacks, are there also economic attacks involved? To what extent is US hostility the result of the great economic achievements of China under the leadership of CPC? Can we say that the very existence of a socialist economy—and a rather big one—constitutes a threat to the US hegemony?*

**JR:** So far, the issue of US administrations promotion of separatism has been analysed in isolation from other social developments the US has supported. The relation of promoting separatists in creating political disruption is obviously clear but it is also crucial to understand that encouragement of separatism also has a direct link to US attempts to create capitalist restoration in socialist countries.

The reason for this relation is that a socialist system is politically centralised in the sense that the state, led by the communist party, has not only the dominant political role but also the dominant economic one. In the words of the 3rd Plenum of the 18th Congress of the CPC, China's socialism rests on “the dominant position of public ownership.” However, capitalism is in economic terms essentially a decentralised system—economic control lies with the individual capitalists. Separatism, by breaking up the unified state, therefore directly aids such capitalist forces attempting to create a decentralised system. It was precisely for this reason that Yeltsin, the leader of capitalist restoration in the USSR, was so closely tied to the separatists.

In August 1991 in the USSR, the crucial moment in the restoration of capitalism, the new capitalist class and the separatists decisively came together. What was falsely presented in the West as a “heroic” defence of the Russian parliament, the “Russian White House,” by Yeltsin and his supporters among the people was in reality entirely different.



The White House was amply supplied with food, supplies and all necessary materials by the new Russian capitalists. The wider social layers tricked into being confused “defenders” of the White House were cynically used. Only later, when the USSR was destroyed, and economic catastrophe unfolded in Russia, did it become transparent what was happening.

Typical was one of my closest Russian friends who was at the White House in August 1991. Later she understood she had been totally betrayed—and caused a scandal by refusing to stand at a meeting when the death of Yeltsin was announced in 2007 saying “Why should I stand for someone who destroyed my country.” All separatist forces in the USSR of course supported Yeltsin. The separatists and the new comprador capitalists together formed the core of the forces grouped around Yeltsin.

This core relation of separatists and the new comprador capitalists, who definitely came together in August 1991 to take state power, then formed the core of the alliance which in December 1991 achieved the final goal of the separatists in the destruction of the USSR. By December 1991 all republics of the former USSR, except Russia and Kazakhstan, had declared independence. Yeltsin, meanwhile, took over the government of Russia. On December 8, 1991, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, signed the Belavezha Accords, which declared the Soviet Union dissolved.

I was in Moscow at that time and remember my friends being totally stunned by the news that their country, the USSR, was to be literally destroyed. In China it would be the equivalent not only of Taiwan Province or Hong Kong breaking away from but numerous provinces declaring independence from China. On December 21, 1991, the representatives of all Soviet republics except Georgia signed the Alma-Ata Protocol, which confirmed the accords. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned as the President of the USSR, declaring the office extinct—he turned over all remaining powers to Yeltsin.

Following from the complete victory of separatism in the USSR Yeltsin, in January 1992, then immediately launched “shock therapy,” based on privatisation, to economically restore capitalism in Russia. There then unfolded the greatest economic disaster in such a large country in peacetime since at least the Industrial Revolution. Between 1991 and 1998 Russia’s GDP fell by 40%.<sup>3</sup> Separatists fused with the new capitalists in Russia and the other former republics of the USSR to restore capitalism across the former Soviet Union. Capitalism was restored in the USSR at the expense of destruction of the country.

The same alignment of forces came together to defeat the final attempt to block shock therapy by the Russian legislature. This was in Yeltsin’s coup d’etat of October 1993 in which tanks were used to suppress the Russian parliament. Abandoning any pretence of “democracy,” the banner under which they had restored capitalism, both the great bulk of the Russian comprador capitalist class and the West, abandoning its hypocritical pretence of supporting “democracy,” supported the crushing of the Russian parliament by military force. Separatists across the entire former USSR of course cheered Yeltsin on.

## Other Forces

**ZL:** For such a “hybrid war,” there must be some other tactics, right?

**JR:** Absolutely. In its attack on the USSR the US made use of other forces which were integrated around the central core of comprador capitalists and separatists—it will be seen



that, as with separatists and comprador capitalists, the US attempts to make use of the same forces in its attacks on China. It is because of the combined character of this attack on numerous fronts that Russian patriots and the Latin American left refer to this as US “hybrid war.” This is a form of attack which stops short of frontal military attack, although it may include provoking partial military conflicts, but which goes far beyond purely economic methods. Amongst the forces which the US used in its attack on the USSR were:

Support for jihadist terrorists—Osama bin Laden and other jihadists first became a significant force through being aided by the US in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Now, of course, US has given refuge to separatist leaders from Xinjiang and is in practice trying to create conditions for the spread of jihadist terrorism in Xinjiang—and to aid the lies about China’s policy in Xinjiang.

Establishing pro-US forces in the media—in the USSR under Gorbachev significant parts of the Soviet media were taken over by forces supporting capitalism, separatism and the West. The US has similarly spent billions of dollars seeking to win over sections of the mass media in China—although this has fortunately recently become more difficult due to the steps taken by the CPC to deal with this.

Spreading Western “marginalist” economic ideas in universities—a large number of Soviet economics departments were taken over by followers of Hayek, Kornai and other anti-socialist theorists. The same tactic is being attempted by the US in China.

Universities were also used to spread the myth that the US supported “universal human values.” In private the comprador capitalists in fact supported the model of the Pinochet military dictatorship in Chile—as they clearly explained to me falsely believing that, because I was a Westerner, I would support attacks on Russia. It was literally, and in these words, explained to me by such forces that if old people could not adapt to the capitalist economy they should be allowed to die. Encouragement of the myth that the US is motivated by “universal human values” is of course an idea that is attempted to be spread in China despite all the wars and actions of the US—although the actions of Trump have destroyed many such illusions.

Economic pressure was used as a political weapon—in the case of the USSR by the huge arms build-up under Reagan, which was not intended to fight a war but to create problems for the USSR if it tried to match it, and in the case of China the tariffs, attacks on Huawei, etc., imposed by Trump.

The internet was not remotely as significant a factor in 1985–1991 as at present but, in line with its method of hybrid war, the US would undoubtedly have used the internet, cyber warfare, etc., as it does now, if they had been available.

In summary there is nothing new in the forms of attacks on China used by the US at all—there are just tactical differences in the light of changed circumstances. But although these forces used against the USSR, and now against China, operated on many different fronts, the “hybrid warfare,” however, always had one clear goal in the USSR—the overthrow of the communist party, the establishment of capitalism and creating the national catastrophe which followed from the victory of separatism.

**ZL:** *Even with the powerful penetration of the US forces and their elite compradors in the Soviet Union, didn't the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the USSR government have any chance to resist the separatist forces? What exact role did the CPSU and the Soviet government play during this whole process? In your opinion, in the face of a US*

*initiated “hybrid war,” what are the differences between China and the Soviet Union? And what are the different impact accordingly?*

**JR:** Well, the difference to the situation in China is that the CPSU under Gorbachev went along with and capitulated to these attacks while the CPC did not. The consequences of this will be analysed below.

It may be seen from the above that, with a decisive exception, the role of the government, the alignment of social forces in the USSR/Russia faced with the assault by the US was the same as that which is seen in China faced with the attack by the Trump administration. Wang Wen has presented an excellent analysis of the reaction of different social strata in China to the Trump administration’s economic aggression: “The vast majority of ordinary people are highly supportive of the state’s policy of counter-bullying in the United States, and the current fear of the US exists mainly in some social elites” (Wang 2019) The position of ordinary people and the social elite was the same in Russia and in China. The decisive difference was in the positions taken by the governments of the two countries.

The reason I was able not only to analyse the social groups in Russia from outside, but then to see them with my own eyes, resulted from the fact that there was nothing mysterious about the process that took place under Gorbachev in the USSR—it was perfectly possible to foresee the catastrophe he was creating in advance. I have described several times how I analysed the reasons for the success of China’s economy at that time—summarised in my 1992 article which was originally published in Russian.<sup>5</sup> But, for the same reasons that it was possible to see in advance that China’s policies would be successful, it was possible to foresee that Gorbachev’s would be a disaster. Due to this, as soon as it was practically possible, in the months just before the collapse of the USSR, I started to go to Moscow. It therefore became possible to witness with my own eyes the events which could be analysed theoretically. I was able there to meet Russians at a very large number of social levels, from ministers to the ordinary families I lived with to learn Russian.

Also, as noted earlier, when I got to Moscow, I had a rather different experience to Russians because, as I was a Westerner, it was wrongly assumed that I must support the attacks on Russia! Therefore, the comprador forces spoke to me openly of their goals in a way they were careful to conceal from Russians—later, when I published article of course they stopped. But this period created many indelible memories which supplemented in a living way the nature of social forces which could also be analysed theoretically. People in China can judge whether the same type of forces exist in their own country—I will give some views on this later in the article.

The most terrible mass memory in Russia after the destruction of the USSR was the treatment under Yeltsin of the generation which won the war against Nazi Germany. In the Great Patriotic War, as World War II against fascism is known in Russia, 27 million Soviet citizens were killed (Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation 2019)—a higher proportion of the population even than were killed in China’s war against Japanese militarism. The human cost was incalculable and continued long after the war—to take only one example because more men than women were killed millions of Soviet women were never able to find a partner in life. This generation saved not only their own country but the whole of Europe from fascism.

After the incredible sacrifices and achievements of this generation, equal to the Chinese people who fought Japanese aggression, it should have been one of the highest duties of the

state to honour and look after such people as they became old. But instead what happened? When they were in their sixties or seventies their pensions were destroyed by inflation, they were forced to stand on the streets for hours literally trying to sell a single cigarette or a pie they had cooked at home.

I also saw at first hand the patriotism of the ordinary Russian people. One of the ceremonies I most admire in the world is that it is a custom in Russia that when a couple are married on that day they visit the local war memorial—to remind themselves that their happiness is only possible because of the sacrifices of those who fought to defend their country.

What a total contrast of this patriotism of the ordinary Russian people to the pro-Western, pro-capitalist forces who spoke to me openly because of their mistaken view that because I was a Westerner, I would support their anti-Russian views. As noted earlier, they said that it would be better if these pensioners, the generation who had saved their country from fascism, were dead because they could not fit into capitalism. They literally explained, in direct words, that it would have been better if Nazi Germany had defeated the USSR in World War II, with the enslavement of Russia that would have followed, because that way capitalism would have been established in Russia more quickly. This is the equivalent of Chinese who declared that they wanted the victory of Japan in its war against China because this would have led to the victory of capitalism in China.

The contempt of such comprador pro-capitalist people for their own country was shown particularly vividly on May 9—the most solemn date in the Russian calendar because it is the day of victory of the Soviet Union over German fascism and therefore the day to remember all the extraordinary national sacrifices in that struggle.

Today, because most of the generation who defeated German Nazism have died, one of the most notable events in Russia is the parade of the “immortal regiment”—in which Russians parade with photos of their parents, grandparents and relatives who fought in the Great Patriotic War. Because this is such a solemn day not only state events but numerous local meetings to commemorate the martyrs are held. For obvious reasons, solemn events predominate on that day and not light entertainment. But in order to show their contempt for their own country the comprador pro-capitalist forces in Russia precisely decided to engage in light parties and entertainment on May 9.

I also found out the intellectual dishonesty of the pro-Western so called “intelligentsia.” When it was announced that shock therapy would start on January 1, 1992, I naturally wrote an analysis of this—accurately predicting that it would create an economic catastrophe. It was extremely difficult to get this published. I remember vividly a discussion with one of the editors from *Izvestia*, one of the most important Russian newspapers. He said that they refused to publish my article because of its prediction that inflation in Russia in 1992 would be far above the government’s official target of 250%. He said to me “we are not going to publish alarmist nonsense. Some prices are already falling, such as sour cream (an important part of the Russian diet).” Eventually inflation in Russia in 1992 was even higher than I predicted—entirely confirming my prediction. Eventually the article was published in *Pravda*, the newspaper of the communist party, but none of the pro-Western media would publish what was an entirely accurate prediction.

This is the same as I have found in China. Before I started to write articles and on *weibo* (micro-blog) high social level comprador forces assumed I must support the US against China. Therefore, they explained their real ideas more to me than they would to a Chinese person. They claimed that nothing had been achieved in China before 1978—when I knew perfectly well that 1949–1978 had seen the fastest increase in life expectancy, which is the best overall indicator of social improvement, in a major country in human history. They preferred to be called by Western names rather than their Chinese names—presumably Western names were better than Chinese names. They argued that China should adopt a position of “appeasement” to the US—that is accepting all US demands on the pattern of the British government in the 1930s of capitulating to all Hitler’s demands, the policy which culminated in World War II. This is exactly the position described by Wang Wen: “The vast majority of ordinary people are highly supportive of the state’s policy of counter-bullying in the United States, and the current fear of the US exists mainly in some social elites” (Wang 2019). The key difference, as will be analysed, is that in the USSR/Russia Gorbachev and the Yeltsin government gave in to US demands, producing national catastrophe, while in China the CPC defended the country against these US attacks.

### Compradors and Separatists in Hong Kong

**ZL:** *Your national identity and your appearance of a white man obviously put you in a very unique position in your interaction with Western separatist forces and their elite agents in the Soviet Union before. Are you having similar experiences in dealing with the compradors and separatists in Hong Kong today?*

**JR:** Well, returning directly to the issue of Hong Kong, yes, again because I am Western, and not Chinese, some people in Hong Kong made the equivalent mistake to that which occurred in Russia of assuming I must share the aims of the “West” and therefore of speaking to me openly of their views. I apologise for telling true stories which are deeply offensive, but they show the depth of the problem created by British rule in Hong Kong. At its most extreme one Hong Kong person I had to work with insisted on cleaning the plates when they went to a mainland restaurant because they didn’t believe people from the mainland could wash them properly—naturally when I found this out I ended relations with them. I know from writing about it on *weibo* that mainland Chinese working in Hong Kong found they were discriminated against by some Hong Kong colleagues—because their Hong Kong colleagues had been educated by the British to consider themselves superior to mainland Chinese.

The reality that this is a result of “slave mentality” is shown by the fact that the same people in Hong Kong who considered themselves superior to their countrymen and women from the mainland were servile to those from the West. For example, one of the discussions created by my article “Brexit Explains Why Britain Began to Provoke the Hong Kong and Huawei Issue” (Ross 2019) was published by a patriotic Chinese as “Letter from a Hong Kong Citizen: A Statement by My Son Worries Me a Lot.”<sup>6</sup> This reported how a young person preferred to see the English version of my article—apparently something published in English was considered superior to something published in Chinese.

In other words, naturally with certain specific characteristics, the same social alignments are found in Russia, in the mainland of China and in Hong Kong. It is for that reason I can verify from my own experience that the analysis made by Wang Wen is correct.

## The Role of the Communist Party

**ZL:** *From what you have said, penetration of Western separatist forces and their comprador elite exist in both the Soviet Union before its collapse and in the mainland and Hong Kong of China today. What about the Soviet communists? Did no members of the CPSU stand up to defend their country, which their fathers had sacrificed tremendously for its survival? What kind of lessons should the communists in China learn from the lessons of the Soviet Union?*

**JR:** I have explained the many disgusting individuals I met from the comprador capitalists and anti-patriotic forces in both Russia and China. But I also met in Russia people entirely devoted to their country—some of whom remain among my closest friends to this day. These were people who were not afraid to risk sacrificing their own lives for their country—for example who tried to defend the Russian parliament when it was attacked by Yeltsin's tanks in October 1993. I saw in this event the incredible bravery of individual Russian people—unarmed civilians who attempted to put themselves physically between the tanks and the parliament in the hope that they would be able to stop the soldiers from carrying out Yeltsin's criminal orders.

I also met high level Russian officials who were prepared to attempt to carry out their duty to their country—I remember, for example, a meeting with the First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia who played a key role in blocking an earlier attempted coup d'état by Yeltsin in March 1993. I met regularly with high level advisers to the Russian parliament in the period before the October 1993 coup by Yeltsin. These are people for whom I have the deepest personal respect. Some of them I know placed their own lives in serious danger in order to serve their country. But they could not achieve the impossible. Confronted with the all-out assault of the US they could not compensate for the capitulation of the communist party under Gorbachev. These people showed exactly the courage and intelligence that was required to save their country but that could only be a first step to recover from the historical catastrophe brought about by Gorbachev.

This reflects the reality that it is a gigantic historical process which is necessary to create a historical force capable of leading the rejuvenation of country. For China, as Xi Jinping succinctly summarised:

In 1911, the revolution led by Sun Yat-Sen overthrew the autocratic monarchy that had ruled China for several thousand years. But once the old system was gone, where China would go became the question. The Chinese people then started exploring long and hard for a path that would suit China's national conditions. They experimented with constitutional monarchy, imperial restoration, parliamentarism, multi-party system and presidential government, yet nothing really worked. Finally, China took the path of socialism. (Ren 2014)

Due to this desperate fight for China's future every idea and every political force was tested for its correctness against the reality of the struggle of hundreds of millions of people and involving the death of millions of martyrs who gave their lives for China's national

rejuvenation. It precisely took this struggle of hundreds of millions of people, and tens of millions of martyrs, to create the CPC.

Lenin (1920) noted a similar process in his own country's history:

For about half a century—approximately from the forties to the nineties of the last [19th] century—progressive thought in Russia, oppressed by a most brutal and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for a correct revolutionary theory . . . Russia achieved . . . the only correct revolutionary theory—through the agony she experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unparalleled revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial, disappointment, verification . . .

Bolshevism, which had arisen on this granite foundation of [Marxism] theory, went through fifteen years of practical history (1903–1917) unequalled anywhere in the world in its wealth of experience. During those fifteen years, no other country knew anything even approximating to that revolutionary experience, that rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement—legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms. In no other country has there been concentrated, in so brief a period, such a wealth of forms, shades, and methods of struggle of all classes of modern society.

As with the CPC it had therefore taken a similar historical struggle, involving the deaths of millions of people and the most intense and varied forms of struggle and testing of ideas, to create the CPSU. Once that party degenerated and was overthrown, under Gorbachev, no matter how great the heroism and devotion of the patriots I met in Russia it was completely impossible for them to create in a short period a force capable of withstanding the US assault.

It is the same with China. In addition to comprador traitors to China, I have met many deeply patriotic Chinese who I am convinced in the same desperate situation that faced some of the patriots I knew in Russia would show the same personal heroism and devotion. But if the CPC were to degenerate or be overthrown, despite their patriotism and heroism they also would not have the time to rebuild a political organisation capable of saving China from national catastrophe against the “hybrid war” waged against China by the US. In summary, the entire fate of China depends on the success of the CPC. This is something I have the privilege to know from my own personal experience with Russia, China and Hong Kong.

## US Attacks on Other Countries

**ZL:** *Are there any other countries in this list that have been the targets of the US attacks in the form of “hybrid war”? Maybe we could look at it within a broader historical context. What has the US done to other socialist or leftist movements around the world?*

**JR:** This lesson regarding the role of the CPC is also confirmed by that of other countries. No left-wing social democratic or right-wing capitalist force has been capable of resisting an assault by the US in the entire period since World War I. To illustrate this first left-wing forces will be analysed and then right-wing ones.

After World War I the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) saved capitalism by allying with German reactionaries and militarists—including by murdering the communist martyrs Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The result of this safeguarding of capitalism



was the coming to power in 1933 of Hitler, fascist aggression, and finally national catastrophe for Germany in its defeat in the anti-fascist war and its partition between the US and USSR for almost fifty years. More generally since the split in the international socialist movement in 1914–1917, with the division into Social Democratic and Communist Parties, the Social Democrats have achieved socialism precisely nowhere—and today the welfare state they created in Europe is being directly undermined by a US assault.

Similarly following 1999, and up to 2014, a left-wing “pink tide” unfolded across an entire continent in Latin America. This was, of course, strongly opposed by the US. After 2014 this “pink tide” suffered defeats in the biggest Latin American countries and economies—such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Left-wing forces have held onto power in Venezuela but major mistakes in economic policy, a failure to learn from highly successful socialist economies such as China and Vietnam, created difficulties which were then severely compounded by US sanctions. In two countries, Bolivia and Nicaragua, the left-wing forces adopted more successful economic policies, closer to those of China, and maintained power. But in the big Latin American countries and economies the right wing took power—installing regimes that were closely tied to the US. Certainly, both the right and the left in Latin America have deep social roots, and the support of mass forces. Right-wing policies in Latin America are a failure and therefore this creates the real possibility for left-wing forces returning to power, but if they do so it is vital for success they have superior policies to those of the period of the “pink tide” which was unable to deal with the consequences of the economic problems which hit Latin America after the downturn in global commodity prices.

This outcome of the “pink tide” was entirely different to Cuba, a small country less than 150 kilometres from the US, where there is a communist party, which has successfully held out against the US attacks for sixty years with extraordinary social achievements. Life expectancy in Cuba, a developing country, is over a year longer than in the US.

Naturally this does not mean that communists in Latin America take a sectarian attitude to non-communist socialist and left patriotic forces. On the contrary, it is absolutely necessary to unite with them to achieve social progress and defence of their countries against the US. But the defeats of the “pink tide” again demonstrated the lesson of the one hundred years—the inability of non-Marxist/non-communist socialist forces to successfully wage a prolonged struggle against US attacks.

In Europe, considering mass left-wing forces, a similar development occurred in Germany when, under the Social Democrat leader Schroeder, it opposed the disastrous US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US set about undermining Schroeder, as it did the French President Chirac who had also opposed the Iraq invasion, and in 2005 the US campaign was successful with Merkel becoming Chancellor.

Turning to right-wing forces, there are numerous examples of their inability to withstand for a prolonged period assaults by the US. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, a period of Christian Democratic government, West Germany’s economy grew much more rapidly than the US. In order to block this the US demanded that West Germany carry out large currency revaluations to raise its exchange rate compared to the dollar and make the German economy less competitive. West Germany capitulated to this, fixed investment in its economy therefore declined sharply, and from the 1970s its economy grew far less rapidly. A detailed analysis of this is given in my book in Chinese *A Big Plan: Analysis of the New Fate of China* (Ross 2016).



Similarly, in the 1950s and 1960s Japan's economy grew much more rapidly than the US. To block this the US demanded that Japan carry out massive currency revaluations compared to the dollar. Furthermore, after the Wall Street stock market crash of 1987 the US demanded that Japan reduce its interest rates to ultra-low levels so that finance would flow out of Japan to stabilise US financial markets. The right-wing Liberal Democrats dominated Japan's government throughout this entire period. The result was the Japanese "bubble economy" of the late 1980s which led to the Japanese stock market crash after 1990, a severe decline in fixed investment, and the Japanese economy entering into near stagnation for more than two decades. Again, a detailed analysis of this is given in my book *A Big Plan: Analysis of the New Fate of China*.

As already noted in 2003 French right-wing president Chirac opposed the US invasion of Iraq. The US set about undermining Chirac, as with German Chancellor Schroeder, and in 2007 he was replaced by the far more pro-US Sarkozy.

To add to the list the US in the Middle East succeeded in defeating a whole series of nationalist regimes both of the left and the right—Mosaddeq, Nasser, Saddam Hussein, Gadhafi, etc.

In these struggles the US utilised many different forms of attack ranging from direct military assault (Vietnam, Iraq, Libya), to economic pressure (Germany, Japan), to fomenting internal disorder and coups (Iran against Mosaddeq, Ukraine, etc.), to more subtle and sustained undermining of political forces they wished to remove (Schroeder, Chirac, etc.). All these different forms, short of frontal military attack, are brought together in the concept of hybrid war which is now being used against China.

Again, naturally these lessons do not mean that there should be sectarianism to non-communist forces. The CPC always entered into a united struggle with patriotic non-communist forces in China, and the same policy should be followed in other countries. There have been, of course, progressive struggles led by non-communist forces, but the historical experience of more than a century unequivocally shows the lesson—non-communist forces are incapable of withstanding a prolonged attack by the US. Only a communist party—in China, Vietnam and Cuba—has proved capable of defeating a US attack over a prolonged period.

## The Success of the CPC

**ZL:** *The conclusion for China is obvious. The progress of which anti-China forces in the US are now determined to block is clear. China is now being subjected to a multi-front typical form of hybrid warfare. Only a communist party, the CPC, is capable of defeating this. Only the CPC is capable of continuing China's national rejuvenation and defeating the attack by the US. Any defeat of the CPC would lead to a national catastrophe for China of the type which occurred in the USSR. That being said, how will the other countries around the world be affected by the success, or failure, of the CPC? What does CPC's success in China mean to other countries and regions of the world?*

**JR:** The success of the CPC is, of course, most immediately of decisive significance for China—the continuation and success of China's national rejuvenation depends on the success of the CPC. But the reality is that this struggle for China's national rejuvenation is also of decisive significance for the whole world. The US, particularly under aggressive regimes

of the Trump type, is a direct threat to humanity—as seen in its disastrous military interventions in the Middle East, its destabilising abandonment of arms limitation treaties, and its abandonment of any restraints on its severely damaging policies on climate change. While China is fighting for its own national rejuvenation, and China’s national rejuvenation is the task of the CPC, the victory of the CPC in this struggle also corresponds to the interests of the whole of humanity. That is why those who are not Chinese have such a direct interest in China’s success.

**ZL:** *As the last question, let us get back to the concrete question about Hong Kong. It is crucial for us to understand that we are not dealing only with immediate intervention by the US and Britain, although that is of course occurring, but with the use by those forces of the long-lasting effects in Hong Kong of the British colonial tactic of “divide and rule.” If so, what kind of damages would be caused by the separatist forces in Hong Kong? And how should the central government respond?*

**JR:** The forces leading the Hong Kong riots are not “confused” people who can be persuaded by rational argument to abandon their separatist activities. They are hardened separatist forces who can only be dealt with by the law. An understanding by the great majority of the population in Hong Kong that such forces have zero chance of success is crucial for dissuading confused people from following them.

On the other hand, the activity of these separatist forces is greatly damaging the economy and social stability of Hong Kong. The great majority of the population of Hong Kong, like people everywhere, want to get on with their normal life. Some may be confused by grievances such as excessive inequality, very high house prices and rents, etc., but they are not at all interested in the doomed pursuit of separatism.

Separating these two different groups is the key strategic task in Hong Kong. As the separatists have no chance of victory it is only a question of time until this occurs.

But the lesson of Hong Kong applies to far more than this Chinese city. It is an example of the type of “hybrid war,” with its many different fronts, which US administrations will wage against China. In the USSR, faced with such an attack, Gorbachev conciliated these assaults by using his position to promote ideas which were demonstrated to be totally false—that the US administration would not be aggressive if its demands were accepted, that the US administration would not advance NATO up to the borders of the USSR, believing that the US administration was not working hand in glove with the separatists, etc.

In summary, Gorbachev made the disastrous mistake of taking seriously the US administration’s claim that its policy was based on “universal values” instead of the interests of US capitalism. It was perfectly possible to predict in advance the disaster such beliefs would bring, and I witnessed with my own eyes this predicted catastrophe unfold—these were the most terrible thing I have seen in my life.

In China I met some of the same forces that had produced catastrophe in the USSR and other countries. But the difference is that the CPC, instead of capitulating to these attacks, resisted them. Seeing China’s national rejuvenation unfold, seeing China going forward, is the most pleasant contrast imaginable to the catastrophe I witnessed in Russia and the USSR.

The events in Hong Kong, and their lessons there, are therefore not mysterious. On the contrary, they are simple to comprehend when seen against the background of similar

forms of hybrid war and of other countries subject to this form of attack—some of which have been outlined here. Their central lesson is crystal clear. Against the hybrid war to attack China being seen in Hong Kong, and which will continue to be waged in other forms, only the CPC can successfully defend China and secure China's national rejuvenation. The fate both of China and of the world rests on the successful outcome of that struggle.

## Notes

1. See BBC News, Putin Deplores Collapse of USSR. Accessed June 15, 2015. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4480745.stm>.
2. Calculated from IMF World Economic Outlook Database. Accessed July 16, 2019. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/index.aspx>.
3. Calculated from World Bank, World Development Indicators. Accessed July 16, 2019. <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#>.
4. See Ross (2015) for detail.
5. This was summarised in Ross (2013) that was originally published in Russian in 1992.
6. See the letter sent by an ordinary citizen in Hong Kong to The Observer website: "Letter from a Hong Kong Citizen: A Statement by My Son Worries Me a Lot" (in Chinese). Accessed July 16, 2019. [https://www.guancha.cn/wutaitai/2019\\_08\\_02\\_512013.shtml](https://www.guancha.cn/wutaitai/2019_08_02_512013.shtml).

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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